

## 7. “Alien settlers consisting of Romans”: identity and built environment in the Julio-Claudian foundations of Epirus in the century after Actium

*William Bowden*

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### **Introduction**

The relationship between “the Romans” and their conquered subjects has provided one of the most fertile areas of scholarly discourse in the last two decades, with traditional models of Romanisation increasingly being abandoned as discredited imperialist constructs. These models, which saw a monolithic “Roman” system encompassing material culture and social structures exported in a one-way traffic to Rome’s provinces, have been replaced by a giddy range of theoretical constructs encompassing post-colonial theory, globalisation, “discrepant identity”, creolisation and structuration. This has led to an increasing awareness of the role of the usually voiceless indigenous inhabitants of the regions that came under Roman political control, aided by increasing post-colonial consciousness on the part of a new generation of western scholars.

The increasing importance of post-colonial theory in Roman studies has led to a re-evaluation of the complex ways in which identities such as “Roman” and “native” were flexible rather than being fixed and immutable categories. This recent trend has perhaps focused more on indigenous experience rather than that of the incoming Romans, as part of a natural tendency to move away from the “Romanocentric” scholarship that dominated most of the 20th century. However, it is worth noting that the ordinary “Roman” (whatever part of the Empire he or she originated from) is often as voiceless as the native in many parts of the Empire, unless their lives are illuminated by chance survivals such as the Vindolanda tablets. Equally, an incoming colonist or soldier whether Italian, British, Baetican, Batavian, or Punic in origin will have become “Roman” to an indigenous population by the simple fact of his or her arrival. The extent to which their own

view of their identity was changed through the process of moving from one part of the Empire to another is a different matter. Was a “Roman” identity strengthened through being perceived as the Other by their new neighbours?

The reality of the colonial experience was doubtless disconcerting to the colonists, if not to the same extent that it was disconcerting to those who were forcibly dispossessed of their land. Those who moved to Epirus, for example, were suddenly within an environment in which their neighbours spoke Greek, a language that may have been unfamiliar to many, and were probably as hostile as might be expected given the loss of land involved in colonisation. As with any powerful minority in a similar situation, their (in this case) Italian identity is likely to have become more important and have been increasingly emphasised. However, people from the Italian peninsula had long been present in the area, evidenced for example by the names on some of the manumission inscriptions from the theatre at Butrint.<sup>1</sup> Most famously, we have the members of the Roman aristocracy, such as Titus Pomponius Atticus, who already had major land-holdings and villas in Epirus. Cicero’s correspondence with Atticus on the arrival of the colonists shows that the arrival of other “Romans” was deeply unwelcome. What effect did the arrival of the colonists, described by Strabo as “alien settlers consisting of Romans”,<sup>2</sup> have on the Roman identity of Atticus and his contemporaries? Atticus, as his adoption of that name suggests, subscribed to the idealised Hellenism that was common among the Roman upper class, adding a further level of complexity to the situation.

In an area that had already been under Roman control for more than a century, we must question to what extent the Roman identity of the colonists

and the Roman identity of those already living in the area were subsumed in other more dominant identities relating to social class and regional origins. In particular we must consider the role of the identities forged in the civil war that culminated in the decisive battle at Actium and which shaped the provincial landscape of Epirus. The factions that sided with Octavian (which had to be rewarded), and the factions that opposed him (which had to be either punished or appeased) were all ostensibly Roman in one sense, but this *romanitas* was only one element of a myriad of competing social and political identities.

It appears, therefore, that it would be wholly inaccurate to refer to “the Romans” in Epirus as a homogeneous body with shared cultural values and aspirations. Roman identity was only one of a range of co-existing and conflicting identities that constantly changed and shifted through time and circumstance. The new foundations of the Julio-Claudian period took place in a context that was neither simply Greek nor Roman but one that was specific to the social and political circumstances that had shaped the area during the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE.

Is it possible to trace any aspect of this within the archaeological record? Can we see any elements of this complexity in the material culture and traces of the built environment that are left to us? It is surely legitimate to try to do so, and to devise archaeological methodologies that are appropriate to these questions. At the very least, we must seek to question some of the assumptions on which our definitions and interpretations are based. Rather than viewing Epirus in the period of the Julio-Claudian foundations in terms of that which was Roman and that which was not, we must seek to understand the archaeological record as a reflection of the ideological complexity described above. This paper is an attempt to move in that direction. I will discuss the evidence that we have and how we might interpret it, while highlighting some gaps in our evidential record and suggesting how these gaps might be filled. While I will be discussing the region of Epirus, with which I have some familiarity, much of what I say will also be of relevance in other contexts.

### **A brief historical outline of Rome’s foundations in Epirus**

Roman intervention in Epirus occurred initially in the context of Rome’s successive conflicts with Macedonia. This culminated in Aemilius Paullus’s activities in Epirus in 167 BCE in the aftermath of the 3rd Macedonian war, which reportedly involved

the sacking of 70 *oppida* and the taking of 150,000 people as slaves.<sup>3</sup> Epirus was eventually formally incorporated into Rome’s domains as part of the province of Macedonia in 146 BCE. According to Strabo, in his day Epirus, which had previously been “well populated, though mountainous”, had become “a wilderness, with here and there a decaying village”.<sup>4</sup> While rural decline and depopulation are constantly recurring *topoi* for Roman writers, this situation may have been one of the factors in the process which saw the senatorial aristocracy of Rome establish major land holdings and estates within Epirus, the first area outside the Italian peninsula where this occurred to a significant level. These were the “Epirote men” noted by Cicero and Varro, of which the most famous was Titus Pomponius Atticus, Cicero’s correspondent, who owned an estate in the territory of Butrint.<sup>5</sup>

It was under the Julio-Claudians that the first colonies were founded in Epirus (Fig. 7.1). At Butrint, a colony was established by Caesar around 44 BCE, possibly as a reflection of the strategic and political importance of Kerkyra which is separated from the mainland by a narrow strait some 3 miles wide.<sup>6</sup> The imposition of the colony was ostensibly a punishment for an outstanding tax debt on the part of the town. Although Atticus discharged the debt in return for a promise that the colony would not be established, Caesar’s death meant that the redirection of the colony was never ratified. Subsequently in the summer of 44 BCE, a small detachment of colonists arrived at Butrint. They were almost certainly civilians rather than veterans, a mixture of freedmen and clients of powerful individuals in Rome, a situation analogous to that of the Caesarean colony at Corinth.<sup>7</sup>

Soon after his victory at Actium in 31 BCE, Augustus renewed Butrint’s colonial status, a change noted in the title *Colonia Augusta* which appears on the town’s coinage at this time. This ushered in an extraordinary period in the town’s history, when its purported Trojan ancestry gave it an important role in the creation of the new iconography of the Augustan period, including its use as a setting for a key part of the *Aeneid*. This new role was reflected in the patronage of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, evidenced in the epigraphic record of the colony and in a rich assemblage of sculpture from the period.<sup>8</sup>

The major Augustan foundation in Epirus, however, was Nikopolis, the victory city on the plain beneath the site of the camp occupied by Octavian before the battle of Actium. The camp itself was marked by the extraordinary *tropaeum* that overlooked the sanctuary of Apollo with its theatre and the stadium

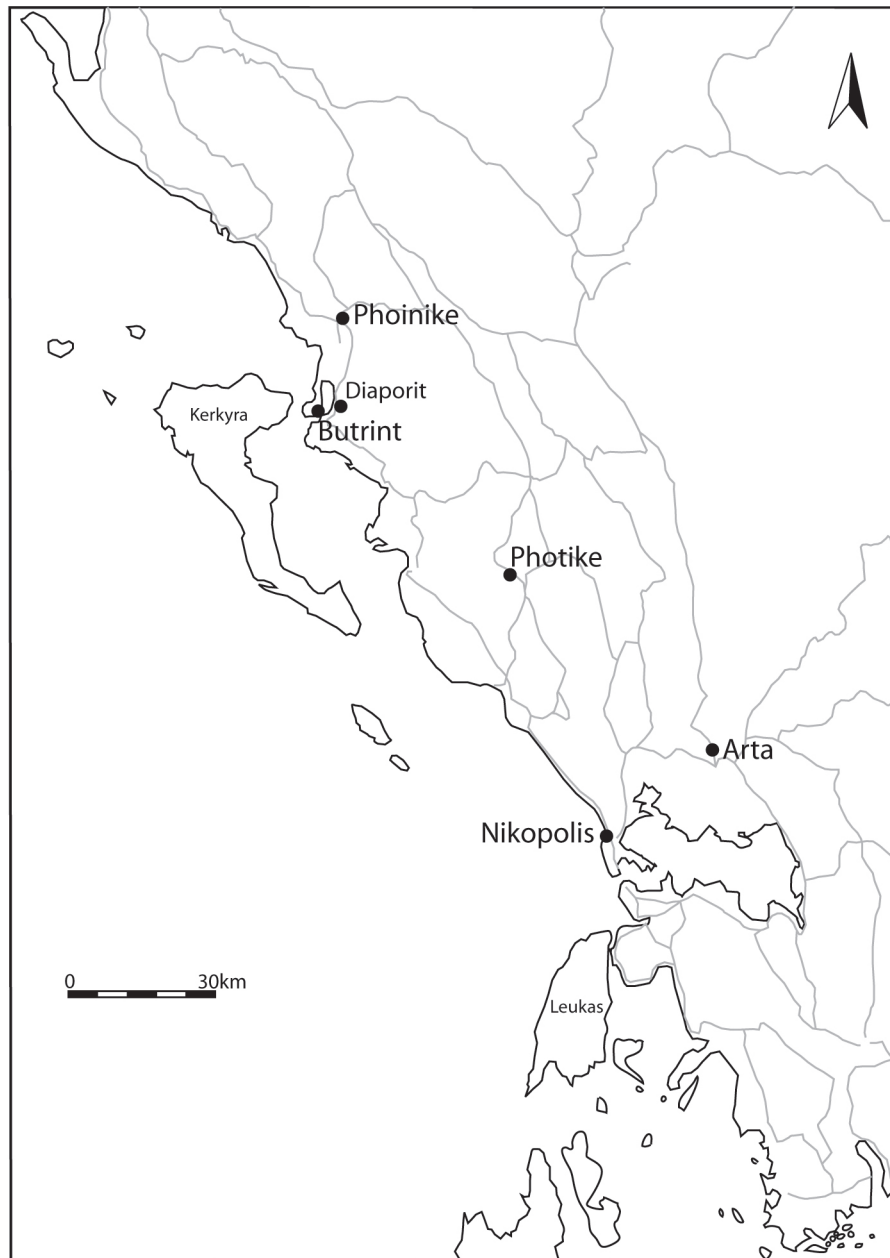


Figure 7.1. Map of Roman Epirus (W. Bowden).

used for the quinquennial Actian games (moved by Augustus from their original home on the southern side of the strait of Actium).

The city was founded sometime after 31 BCE. Its creation involved a process of synoecism in which the inhabitants, deities and sculptural decoration from numerous nearby settlements were more or less forcibly co-opted into the new settlement. Most commentators have argued that it is, to all intents and purposes, a Greek city, founded by a victorious ruler in the manner of a Hellenistic king and populated through an act of synoecism. Strabo describes the foundation and synoecism thus:

In later times, however, the Macedonians and Romans, by their continuous wars, so completely reduced both Cassope and the other Epeirote cities because of their disobedience that finally Augustus, seeing that the cities had utterly failed, settled what inhabitants were left in one city together – the city on this gulf which was called by him Nicopolis; and he so named it after the victory which he won in the naval battle before the mouth of the gulf over Antonius and Cleopatra the queen of the Egyptians, who was also present at the fight. (7.7.6)

However, Pliny refers to its status as a colony, describing it as “the colony founded by Augustus, Actium, with the famous temple of Apollo, and the free city of Nicopolis” (*...et in ore ipso colonia Augusti Actium cum templo Apollinis nobili ac civitate libera Nicopolitana*). Tacitus also mentions *Nicopolim Romanam coloniam*, but he also calls the city *urbem Achaiae Nicopolim*.<sup>9</sup>

This has led some, such as Purcell, to suggest that the settlement may have included colonists, probably civilians displaced by veteran settlements in Italy. He argued that, like the neighbouring city of Patrae, it had dual status as both *colonia* and *civitas libera*.<sup>10</sup> Lange argues, however, that the evidence for a colony at Nicopolis is very limited, noting that neither Strabo nor Suetonius refer to Nikopolis as a colony in otherwise lengthy descriptions of the town and its foundation. Furthermore he argues that unlike Patrae, which minted Latin coins that explicitly referred to its colonial status, all the coins minted at Nikopolis are in Greek and make no mention of the city as a colony. Butrint’s colonial coins are also Latin (as indeed are all colonial coins) and explicitly mention its status as a colony under both Caesar and Augustus. Similarly, there is remarkably little Latin epigraphy from Nikopolis (comprising less than 5% of the total epigraphic corpus).<sup>11</sup> However, the extensive centuriation traced on the Margarona peninsula and further afield would perhaps argue in favour of the presence of a colony, a point to which I shall return below.

Lange insists that Nikopolis is therefore a Greek city, and suggests that the only way to reconcile the evidence with the testimony of Pliny and Tacitus is to hypothesize a separate colonial foundation at Actium itself on the south side of the Strait. However, as Lange himself admits, this is fairly unlikely given that there is no archaeological, numismatic or epigraphic evidence for such a foundation. A further possible explanation is that Nikopolis was given colonial status subsequent to its foundation, which could explain why the colony was not mentioned by Strabo although it does not explain why it was not mentioned by Suetonius and Dio. The simplest explanation (if a slightly unsatisfactory one) is that Pliny and Tacitus were inaccurate in describing Nikopolis as a colony.

If we accept Lange’s argument that there is little evidence for a colony at Nikopolis, then we might say that further discussion of it has little place in this volume. However, colony or not, the evidence from Nikopolis will serve as a valuable point of reference in the discussion that follows. Equally it allows us to question the extent to which labels such as “Roman”,

“Greek”, or even “colony” advances or hinders the study of these settlements.

A second (or third) colony in Epirus is that of Photike in Thesprotia, though by Rizakis to be a Caesarean foundation.<sup>12</sup> We have very little understanding of Photike, which remains unexcavated with knowledge of the town and its inhabitants restricted to epigraphic sources. At least 37 inscriptions relating to the town are known, mainly Latin funerary monuments.<sup>13</sup> The predominance of Latin inscriptions from Photike also provides an interesting comparison to Nikopolis where, as noted above, Latin texts form a very small part of the epigraphic corpus.

Apart from a few chance finds, almost nothing is known of the topography of Photike, although most scholars agree on its approximate location in the area of Liboni slightly north-west of Paramythia.<sup>14</sup> This area is also associated with the *ad Dianam* mentioned on the Peutinger Table on the basis of the discovery of an inscription dedicated to Diana together with a small statue of the goddess, perhaps suggesting the presence of a sanctuary.<sup>15</sup>

### Archaeological evidence for Augustan Butrint and Nikopolis.

An immediate problem when trying to ascertain the impact of these colonies on the lives of the region’s inhabitants and on the lives of the colonists themselves lies in the nature of the evidence that we have, much of which is ill-suited to discussion of the sorts of issues outlined in the introduction.

The reason for this in part relates to the history of study of the region, which understandably reflects the research questions of 20th century classical archaeology with its emphasis on political history on the one hand and art history on the other. This meant primarily a focus on public areas which produced the most impressive discoveries, helped by an archaeological strategy that involved simply digging around visible pieces of standing masonry. Much of what is visible at Butrint was excavated in this fashion, first by the Italians under Luigi Ugolini and then in the 1970s and 1980s by successive Albanian excavators.<sup>16</sup> More recent work at the site has focused first on the late antique and medieval phases and subsequently on the topography of the Roman town.<sup>17</sup>

At Nikopolis, early Greek excavation focused almost exclusively on the city’s Early Christian monuments,<sup>18</sup> although Italian interest in the site during the fascist period focused on the Roman monuments.<sup>19</sup> The latter resulted in the site being surveyed by the Italian army, creating what were until

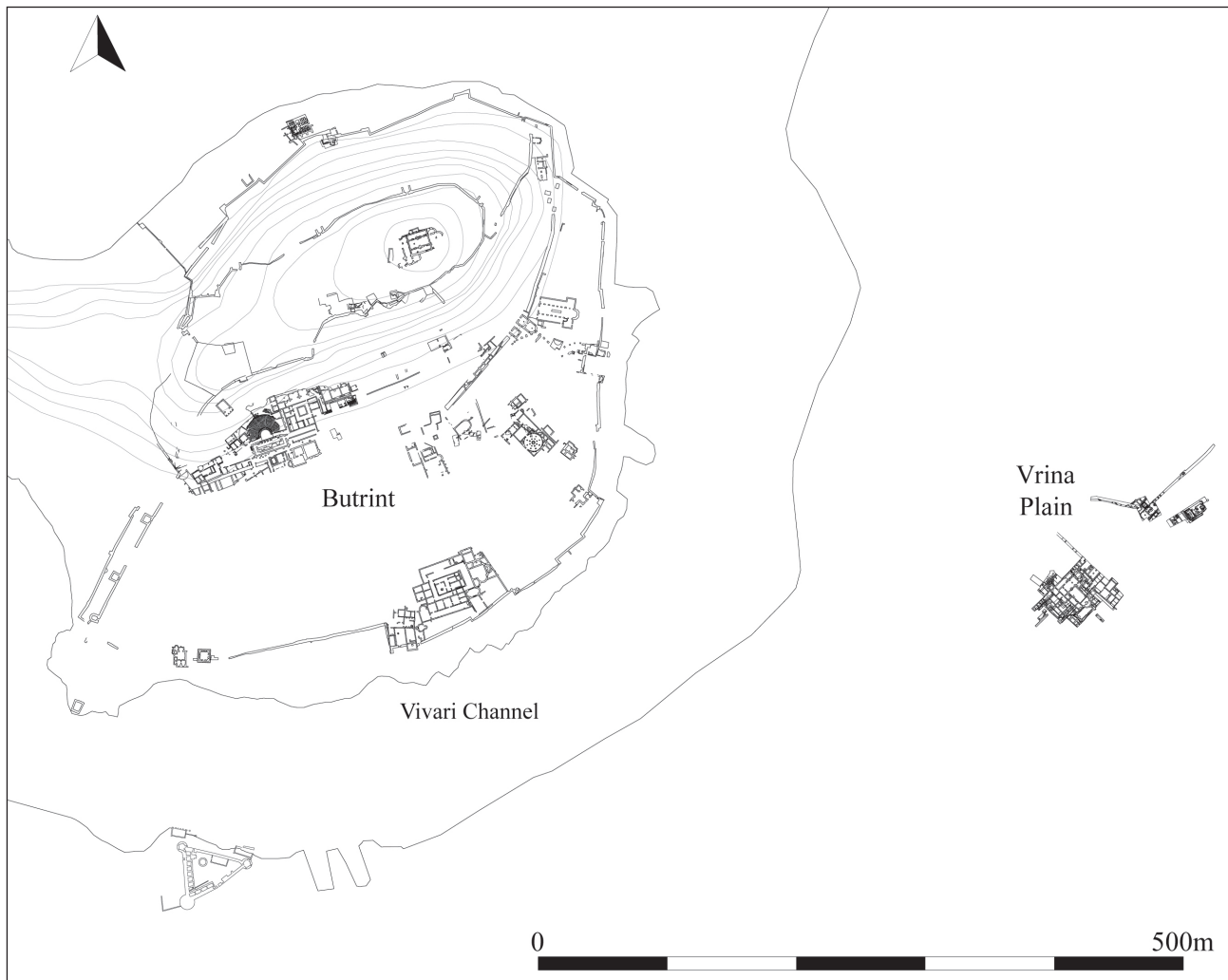


Figure 7.2. Butrint, including the suburb to the south of the Vivari Channel (Butrint Foundation).

relatively recently the most detailed plans of the city and its monuments.<sup>20</sup> More recent work has targeted the monuments of the Roman city, in particular the *Actium tropaeum*, the walls, the cemeteries and the villa of Manius Antoninus, although much of the more recent work has been focused on developing Nikopolis as a heritage site.<sup>21</sup>

I do not intend to provide a detailed description of Augustan Butrint and Nikopolis here, primarily because I have recently attempted to do that elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> Instead I will focus on particular aspects of these towns that may give some indication of the ways in which the inhabitants viewed themselves and presented themselves to the neighbours and the wider world.

### Public areas and elite display

At Butrint, the site that we know to have been a colony, despite very extensive excavations, the

evidence for physical change within the town that can be definitely associated with the early years of the colony is relatively limited. This is in part due to the difficulties encountered in excavating to the depth of the town's earliest levels, caused by high groundwater. The evidence, summarised elsewhere, relates almost exclusively to the public areas of the town, primarily to the construction of the aqueduct and bridge across the channel (seemingly depicted on Augustan coins of the colony), and the area of the sanctuary of Asclepius (Figs 7.2 and 7.3).<sup>23</sup> Here, a large east-west oriented forum was laid out, together with a tripartite building which can be reasonably dated to the late 1st century BCE, or possibly the early years of the 1st century CE.<sup>24</sup> The tripartite building contained an inscription erected by Manius Otacilius Mystes dedicating a shrine to Minerva Augusta. Otacilius Mystes was probably a freedman, possibly one of the colonists sent by Caesar, or a freedman of one of the colonists or of



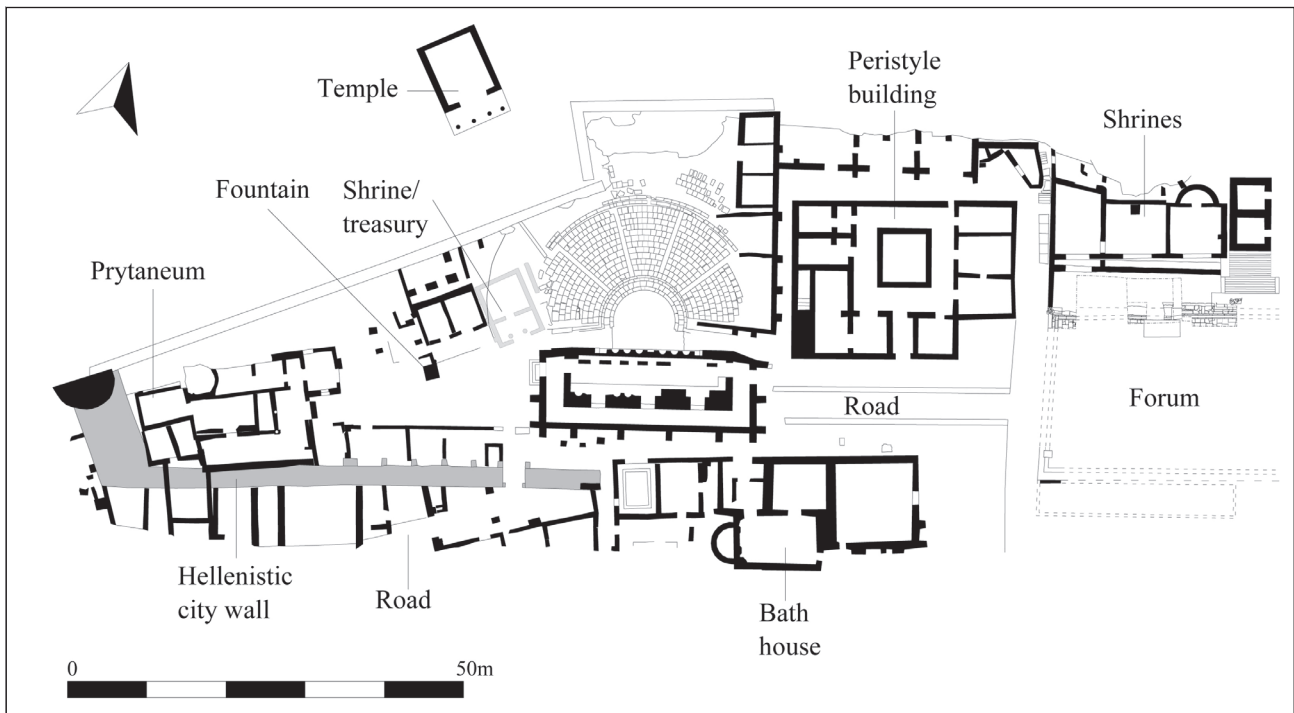


Figure 7.3. The forum and Sanctuary of Asclepius at Butrint (Butrint Foundation).

one of the colonists' descendants, and it is likely that this building is the *capitoleum* of the colony.<sup>25</sup> The theatre may also have been altered at this time with the addition of the *scaenae frons* and further seating banks, although the dates of these additions are a matter of speculation.<sup>26</sup>

The political institutions of the colony were seemingly devised to mirror those of Rome itself, with the city divided into *vici* controlled by *magistri*. One of these *magistri*, Aulus Granius, is recorded on two inscriptions, one dedicated to the *Lares* of the *vicus*, while the second is dedicated to *Stata Mater*, a cult associated with protection from fire and the protection of the pavement of the forum in Rome.<sup>27</sup> Thus we have divisions of civic space and the presence of civic cults that are directly modelled on those of the capital.

The relatively rich epigraphic record from Butrint shows a clear change in the language of epigraphic display from Greek to Latin, a change which as noted above did not occur at Nicopolis where the language of epigraphy was predominantly Greek from the outset. The longevity of Latin as a public language at Butrint is an interesting question. Certainly, by the time Junia Rufina paid for the aggrandisement of the well on the north east side of the city (probably during the 2nd century), it was more appropriate for the inscription to appear in Greek, although a probable 2nd-century funerary inscription from the

Vrina Plain is in Latin, recording an individual with a Greek name (Olympus).<sup>28</sup> Certainly by around CE 400, when the owner of the large *domus* known as the Triconch Palace had his name and rank (*lamprotatos*) commemorated in the mosaic pavement of his house's entrance vestibule, he chose to do it in Greek. Subsequent to this date all epigraphic evidence from Butrint (including texts on items of jewellery) is in Greek. However, it seems most likely that the use of Latin began to decline much earlier, probably during the 2nd century. In this context it should also be noted that minting of the colony's coins ceased after the reign of Nero.<sup>29</sup> It is unknown whether Latin was ever spoken by a significant section of the town's population, but it is clear that it was the language of public display during the first century of the colony's history, and that the audience that mattered to those erecting the inscriptions was a Latin literate one.

In this context it is also interesting to note a bilingual inscription from Photike, probably dating to the 2nd or 3rd century. The first part (in Latin) reads "To the spirits of the dead. The relatives put up (the grave) for the steward (?) slave Tychicus and for themselves". The following section (in Greek) reads "If somebody else puts someone into this grave, he shall give 2,500 denarii to the treasury".<sup>30</sup> A similar message (and an identical fine) is recorded on another funerary inscription from Photike (this time entirely in Greek).<sup>31</sup> The bilingual inscription clearly

implies that the dedicators wished to emphasise their membership of a Latin literate elite (who were the principal intended audience) but to prevent future violation of the grave they were required to stipulate the penalty in a language that all could understand.

At Butrint, despite Atticus's well documented opposition to the colony, the Pomponii occupied a position of prominence within the town in the decades that followed, with a second Titus Pomponius and Publius Pomponius Graecinus holding a series of offices within the town. This was the result of a complex system of patronage in which the Pomponii were linked to Agrippa through his marriage to Atticus's daughter, Caecilia Attica, while the town's purported Trojan ancestry, as noted above, also stimulated the patronage of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.<sup>32</sup>

It is clear then that the inhabitants of Butrint found themselves in a rapidly changing urban environment in which the imperial family and members of a colonial elite were prominently represented through both sculpture and epigraphy. The administrative organisation of the town was also changed fundamentally and the public areas of the town saw alteration through the insertion of the forum. As Rizakis shows in the case of Patrae, we must presume that the new colonial elite was a dominant force in the region that was able to mould the political framework in which they operated to suit their own interests.<sup>33</sup>

At Nikopolis we know little of the public areas within the walled town (Fig. 7.4). The location of the forum is unknown, although it presumably lies in the area of the intersection of the *cardo maximus* and *decumanus maximus*. It is clear, however, that in the manner of a Classical or Hellenistic *polis*, the principal sanctuary lay outside the city.<sup>34</sup> This "thoroughly equipped sacred precinct" as Strabo described it lay beneath the "hill that is sacred to Apollo" on which the Actium monument stood and comprised a theatre, a stadium and a gymnasium.<sup>35</sup> A recently discovered inscription records that a certain Mnasílaidas, son of Archonida, and his wife Polikrita, daughter of Euchitheou built a gymnasium in honour of the memory of Archonida for the gods and for the town.<sup>36</sup>

Although this inscription was found near the Odeion, almost 1km from the sanctuary area, Faklari contends on the basis of the letter forms that it is of Augustan date and is associated with the gymnasium described by Strabo, although there seems no overpowering reason why the latter should be the case. However, whether or not the inscription records the gymnasium associated with the sanctuary, it is interesting to note, as Faklari does, that all the names recorded are Greek and that similar names are

recorded in other local contexts (as well as elsewhere in Greece) in earlier times.<sup>37</sup> Similar gymnasium dedications are known from Messene and other Greek sites. If the inscription is of Augustan date, it represents a significant difference from Butrint in terms of the identity of the early elite of the city, who are clearly local. Equally, whatever the enforced nature of the synoecism, it seems that the new inhabitants of Nikopolis were willing to participate in the civic life of the city at an early stage.

Dominating the sanctuary area was the Actium monument, an extraordinary construction commemorating Augustus's victory and decorated with 36 bronze rams from captured enemy ships. The monument and the discoveries from Zachos's recent excavations have been discussed in considerable detail elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> Here I will only briefly mention two aspects of relevance to this paper. The first is the use of *opus reticulatum* in the monument, more specifically for the facing of the large retaining wall that supported the terrace immediately below the monument. Malcrino suggests that this is the first example of the use of *opus reticulatum* outside Italy, and together with other techniques used in the monument would have required the presence of a team of workers from Italy.<sup>39</sup> The same technique was also used, albeit sparingly, in the *cavea* of the theatre, while other examples appear in a wall within the *domus* of Manius Antoninus, and within a tract of wall beneath Basilica A. Many of the other buildings of the city also utilise building techniques that originate in Italy notably *opus caementicium* used in the odeion together with a decorative *cortina* that Malcrino suggests is an attempt to imitate the pattern of *opus reticulatum*.<sup>40</sup> He argues that the use of this building technique in Greece represents a deliberate choice on the part of local elites to utilise an architectural symbol of *romanitas*.

A single example of *opus reticulatum* can also be seen in the so-called *prytaneum* at Butrint.<sup>41</sup> This was clearly a building of significance in the early years of the colony. An inscription set with lead letters recording Cn. Domitius Eros, a freedman of Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (father of L. Domitius Ahenobarbus) was reused within the pavement close to the building, but is likely to originate from it.<sup>42</sup> Melfi argues convincingly that this building housed the Augustan portrait group from Butrint, citing parallels from elsewhere in Greece. It is thus striking that the only example of reticulate masonry in the town appears in this building.

As well as the use of *opus reticulatum*, a second point to note on the Actium monument lies in the inscription, which departs from most of the epigraphy from Nikopolis by being solely in Latin.

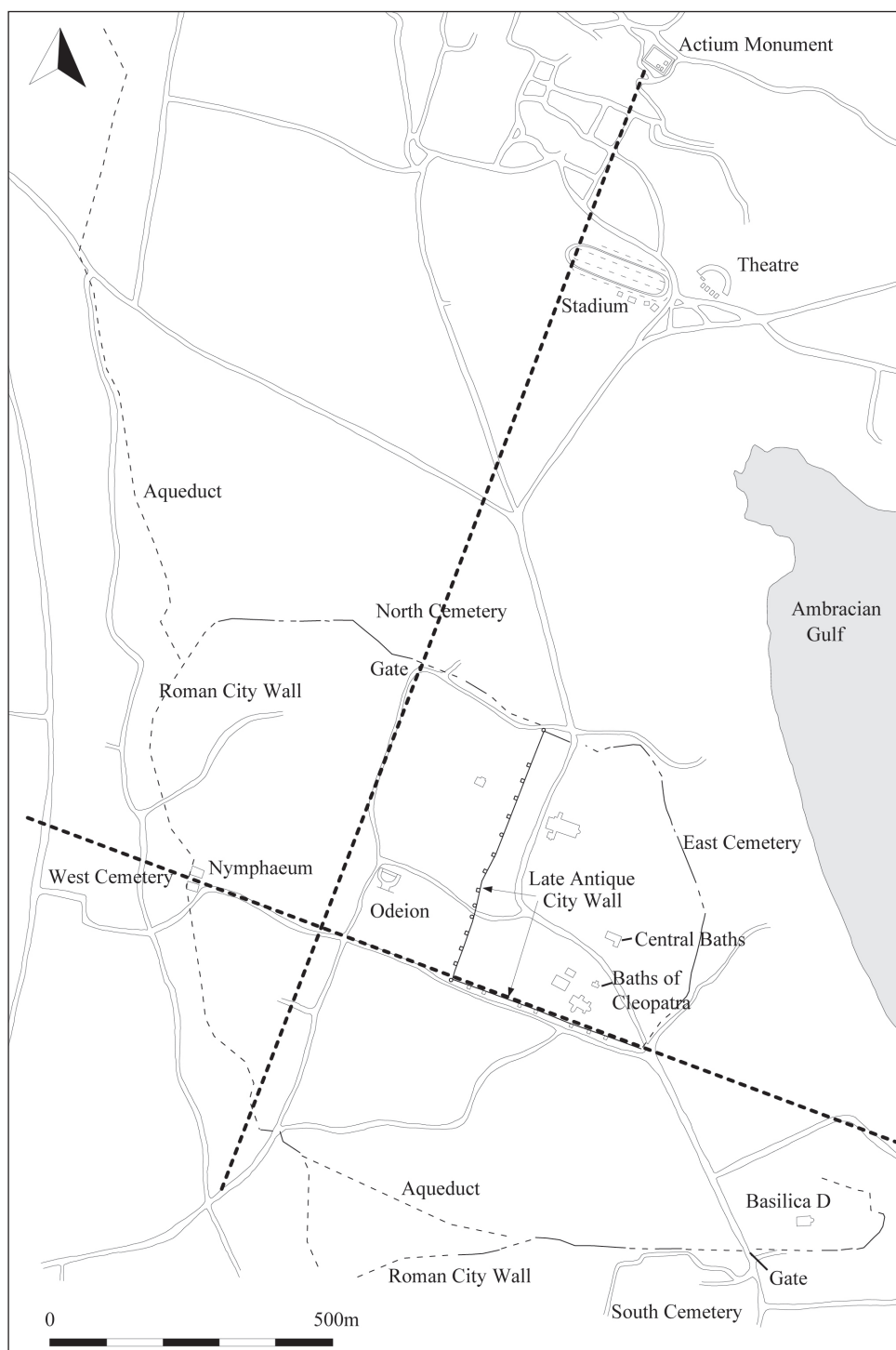


Figure 7.4. Nikopolis (W. Bowden mainly after Pierrepoint-White 1986–97). The dashed lines indicate the probable *cardo maximus* and *decumanus maximus*.

Imp · Caesa]r · Div[i · Iuli · ]f · vict[oriam ·  
consecutus · bell]o · quod · pro [·r]e[·]p[u]blic[a]  
· ges[si]t · in · hac · region[e · consul [· quintum ·  
i]mperat[or · se] ptimum · pace [·] parta · terra  
[· marique · Nep]tuno [· et · Ma] rt[i · c]astra  
[· ex · ] quibu[s · ad · hostem · in]seq[ue]ndum  
egr]essu[s · est · navalibus · spoli]is [· exorna]ta  
· c[onsacravit

(“Imperator Caesar, son of the Divine Julius, following the victory in the war which he waged on behalf of the *res publica* in this region, when he was consul for the fifth time and *imperator* for the seventh time, after peace had been secured on land and sea, consecrated to Neptune and Mars the camp from which he set forth to attack the enemy, now ornamented with naval spoils”).<sup>43</sup>



Lange argues that Murray and Petsas's reconstruction is very problematic, with the last part based on the description of Suetonius.<sup>44</sup> He argues that the subject and wording of the inscription (which does not mention the enemy by name) indicate that Augustus himself had a direct role in its composition and that the intended audience was Roman, describing the *Actium tropaeum* as "a Roman monument for Romans, built onsite and thus of course also given a Greek context".<sup>45</sup> The inscription dates to between 30 BCE and 27 BCE, with 29 BCE considered the most likely date.<sup>46</sup> This early date means that there may be no direct connection between the monument and the foundation of the city, or at least that they were not initially conceived as a unified concept. Certainly the inscription gives no indication of any connection with the city foundation, and it appears that the inscription was not primarily intended to be read by the city's population as otherwise it would have been in Greek or bilingual.

The layout of the city certainly acknowledges the monument, with the *cardo maximus* seemingly aligned on it, with a major tomb-lined street leaving the north gate and running towards the monument and sanctuary area.<sup>47</sup> If the street grid does recognise the presence of the monument this would also suggest that the monument predates the formal laying out of the city, although whether by months or years is unknown.

Ultimately, interpretations of the Actium monument should acknowledge that it would have held different meanings for different audiences and that these meanings would have changed over time. It was a multi-layered monument emphasising triumph in a civil war that many of Nikopolis's future inhabitants would only have been dimly aware of, and at the same time part of a religious complex dedicated to Apollo (who paradoxically was not mentioned on the monument's inscription). How it was viewed by the city's inhabitants can only be imagined, but there is no need to envisage a single response to it on the part of either Greeks or Romans.

The built environment of the city and its cults would in fact have acted as a constant reminder to the city's inhabitants of their former towns. As well as transferring the populations of the synoecised towns, the new city was adorned with statues and architectural elements taken from other sites.<sup>48</sup> The latter included squared limestone blocks reused in the facing on the gates on the city wall together with numerous architectural terracottas, mainly of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, which are readily paralleled at Leucas and Ambracia.<sup>49</sup> As well as the transfer of the cult of Apollo from Actium itself, other cults at

Nikopolis had also been transferred from settlements involved in the synoecism. These included cults of Apollo from Leucas and Ambracia, together with other statues from Aetolia and Acarnania.<sup>50</sup> It is interesting to consider whether these cults and cult images remained the focus of identities based around the earlier communities transferred to the new city.

One important public building missing from Nikopolis is an amphitheatre, which might be expected if the town was conceived in part as a destination for veteran soldiers. An amphitheatre was certainly a feature of Augustus's other Nikopolis, which lay to the east of Alexandria, where it was apparently detrimental to Alexandria's traditional cults.<sup>51</sup> Closer to Actian Nikopolis, the colony at Patrae was given an amphitheatre by Domitian to celebrate the centenary of the colony. According to Welch, amphitheatres were implicitly associated with a Roman civic identity, which she advances as an explanation for the presence of the amphitheatre at Corinth.<sup>52</sup> The absence of such a building from Nikopolis, however, is fully in accordance with the suggestion that the city's urban elite is derived from pre-existing local elites, who would have probably shared the negative feelings of Greece's intellectual upper class towards amphitheatres which were viewed as having a polluting effect on cities and their sanctuaries. Interestingly there is no physical evidence for an amphitheatre at Butrint, although the 10th-century text of Bishop Arsenios of Corfu describes the martyrdom of St Therinus in a theatre at the town during the Decian persecution of CE 251.<sup>53</sup> The existing theatre has no facility for animal spectacles, although Arsenios's story may have simply taken Butrint as the setting for a standard tale of martyrdom.

### The urban plan

When the suburb on the Vrina Plain at Butrint was first identified through geophysical survey, it was thought to represent a planned gridded extension to the town that could be associated with the colony, a pleasing theory that unfortunately had to be abandoned when excavations stubbornly refused to yield any material earlier than the later part of the 1st century CE.<sup>54</sup> The excavations within the town thus far have not revealed any new streets that can be definitely associated with the foundation of the colony, although as noted above, the public areas of the town saw some alterations that probably date to the foundation of the colony.<sup>55</sup>

At Nikopolis, of course, an entire new gridded street plan was apparently laid out, although the street

grid as reasonably reconstructed by Zachos remains almost entirely hypothetical with the exception of the streets excavated to the west of Basilica B and to the east of the villa of Manius Antoninus, together with two short sections of the proposed *decumanus maximus* and *cardo maximus* respectively.<sup>56</sup> The gates of the town in particular remain stubbornly asymmetrical in relation to the gridded plan, as does the plan of the wall circuit (generally thought to be Augustan in date, with 2nd-century additions) which wholly defies explanation. The scale of the enclosed area is breathtaking, with the (incomplete) perimeter of the wall circuit measuring more than 5 km. The purpose of the wall was presumably to create a symbolic boundary and a sense of identity for the town, rather than anything defensive.<sup>57</sup> The extent to which it was ever densely occupied is open to question. Excavations around the 6th-century Basilica A close to the *decumanus maximus* revealed little in the way of underlying stratigraphy, although as Malcrino notes, one of the few structures revealed was a wall in *opus reticulatum* which it is tempting to associate with the early laying out of plots within the town.<sup>58</sup>

### Water supply

The conspicuous consumption of water for baths and fountains was an important aspect of Roman civic identity, and bathing establishments formed one of the most visible monuments within the Roman city. Nikopolis was no exception to this and the city acquired three substantial bath complexes (the Central Baths, the Baths of Cleopatra and the Proasteion Baths), of which the latter two have been suggested to partly date to the Augustan period.<sup>59</sup> To supply the baths, the city was furnished with a major aqueduct, which ran from the springs of the Louros River some 40 km away.<sup>60</sup>

A similar facility was created at Butrint, despite the town having plentiful springs around the base of the acropolis. The Butrint aqueduct probably ran from Murcia some 12 km away and an arcaded structure probably representing the aqueduct appears on the coins of the colony under both Augustus and Nero. The aqueduct necessitated the construction of the bridge across the Vivari Channel that linked the peninsula of Butrint to the Vrina Plain. While this connection already existed (evidenced by the major gateway in the Hellenistic wall circuit at the point where the bridge later reached the town) served presumably by private boats and ferries, the presence of the bridge would have wholly changed the relationship between Butrint and the land and

settlements to the south. The isolation of the peninsula lent itself to the rise of the earlier settlement and sanctuary site, which suddenly became connected to its hinterland in an unprecedented way.<sup>61</sup>

This connection between Butrint and the land to the south was an essential aspect of the colony. It not only brought water to the town via the aqueduct, thereby supplying the baths and fountains that were an essential aspect of Roman civic life, but more importantly connected the political heart of the colony to the agricultural land that formed the basis of power for the new local elite.

The creation of water supplies (and associated drainage systems) would have played a vital role in changing the urban identity of Butrint and creating the urban identity of Nikopolis, with baths and fountains creating an urban Roman *habitus*. The ostentatious nature of the water supply, which signalled mastery over natural resources, gave out a clear message to the inhabitants of both settlements, as well as providing an amenity that would presumably have been viewed positively by them.

### Changes in the landscape

Whatever the nature of political elites at Butrint and Nikopolis, it was land rather than statues that ultimately mattered to the region's inhabitants both old and new. While arguably the erection of inscriptions and the division of land were both different aspects of an overall process of development, the changes within Butrint's political centre could not have happened without the fundamental changes in landownership that accompanied the foundation of the colony. Equally, the built city of Nikopolis was only one aspect of a fundamental reorganisation of the entire social and economic basis of the region, other signs of which can be readily discerned in the landscape.

At Butrint recent work has detected the traces of two major programmes of centuriation on the Vrina Plain to the south of the colony (Fig. 7.5).<sup>62</sup> One followed a grid based on a 20 × 20 *actus* division, while a second on the same alignment was divisible by 12 and 16 *actus*. The 20 × 20 *actus* system was that which was used at Nikopolis and can be reasonably assumed to contemporary with the Augustan foundation (see below).<sup>63</sup> It therefore seems reasonable to date the 20 × 20 *actus* grid at Butrint to the same period. The 16 × 12 *actus* grid is more difficult to date. Three successive 16 × 12 (or 24) grids are known from Corinth, which Romano dates respectively to a reorganisation associated with

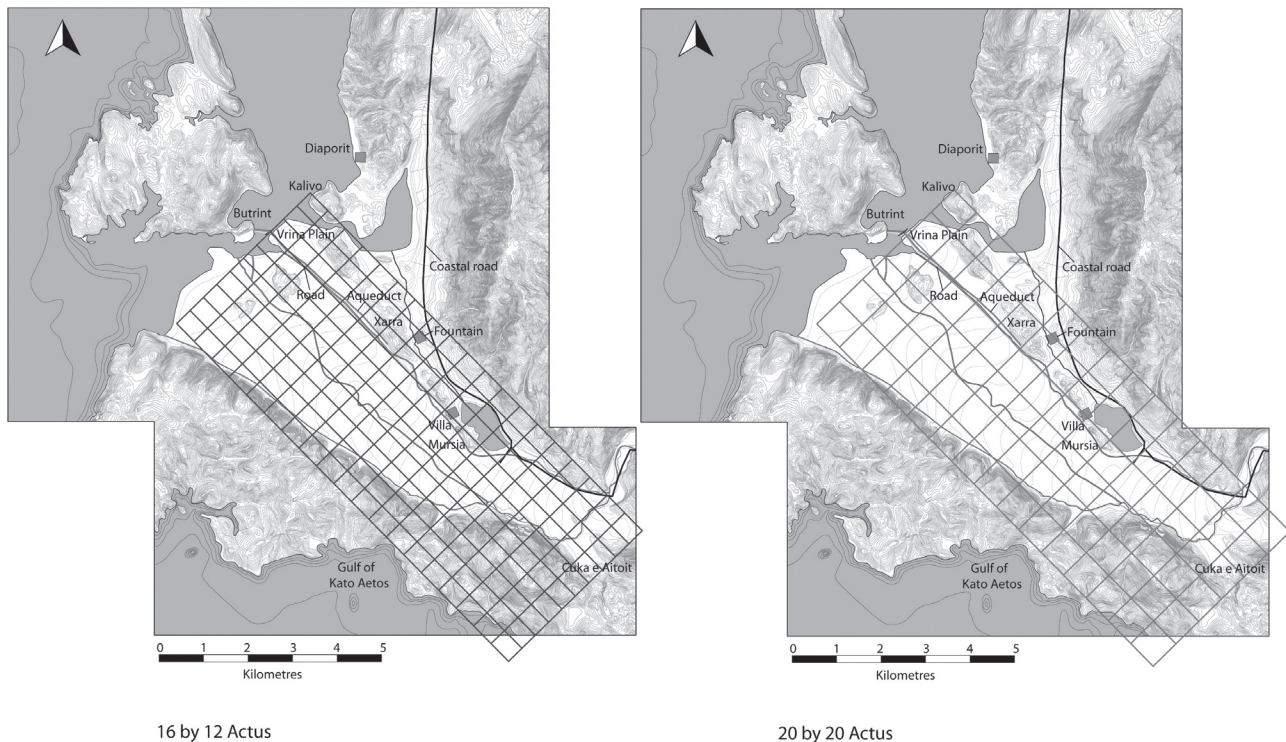


Figure 7.5. Centuriation schemes at Butrint (Butrint Foundation).

the *lex agraria* of 111 BCE, the foundation of the Caesarean colony in 44 BCE and the refounding of the colony under Vespasian.<sup>64</sup> None of these is readily applicable to Butrint, as the putative Caesarean colony was seemingly not established prior to its ratification under Augustus. There is also no evidence of a Flavian refoundation although the archaeology suggests significant expansion in the latter part of the 1st century CE. A similar programme has been noted in the area of Phoinike to the north east of Butrint, and it is possible that the territory of Phoinike was also included in the land divided for the Augustan colony.<sup>65</sup>

This land division was fundamental in effectively restructuring the social and political hierarchy of Butrint. It is notable that none of the families known from Butrint's manumission inscriptions appear in the epigraphic record from the town after the foundation of the colony. The only family that appear to have survived in a position of power are the Pomponii, presumably because of their familial relationship to Agrippa, the son in law of the *princeps*.

At Nikopolis too, the foundation of the Roman settlement seems to have had a far reaching effect upon the landscape although, as I have described elsewhere, the synoecism, together with the brutal actions of Aemilius Paullus in 167 BCE, have tended to be treated as unproblematic explanations of

archaeologically detectable change in Epirus.<sup>66</sup> The abandonment of many of the fortified Hellenistic hill-top sites is invariably associated with one of these events.<sup>67</sup> While it would be foolish to deny their possible effects, we must be wary of seeking or expecting destruction and abandonment. Indeed, more recent work in the region suggests that the destruction of 167 BCE was not as comprehensive as previously thought.<sup>68</sup> Equally the effects of the synoecism on settlement patterns, while undoubtedly dramatic are probably rather more complex than previously thought. Indeed, Petropoulos argues that the desertion of Aetolia and Acarnania increasingly appears to be a myth.<sup>69</sup> At Arta (Ambracia), for example, recent excavation has demonstrated that life in the town continued into the 4th century CE.<sup>70</sup> This is not surprising as the drainage and centuriation on the plain of Arta created land that was hardly going to be farmed by people commuting daily from Nikopolis some 30 km to the southwest.

The landscape around Nikopolis itself was subject to a major programme of land division on a  $20 \times 20$  *actus* grid that followed the alignment of the street grid of the city (Fig. 7.6), and it is reasonable to suggest that this land division was contemporary with the foundation of the city.<sup>71</sup> This centuriation might give some support to the idea of a colony at Nikopolis, although equally the synoecism is likely to



Figure 7.6. Centuriation around Nikopolis (after Doukellis 1988).

have involved a similar programme of land division. The fundamental aims of any act of land division and distribution are to dismantle existing power structures and create new ones that reward supporters and penalise or appease opponents, while creating easily taxable units of land.

The synoecism involved towns and territories at some considerable distance from Nikopolis, and at least some of these territories underwent similar programmes of land division. As noted above, the plain of Arta was divided into a similar  $20 \times 20$  *actus* grid.<sup>72</sup> Was this land distributed among the inhabitants

of Ambracia, or was it (as seems more likely) given to new landlords in Nikopolis who subsequently rented it back to those who continued to live in the reduced settlement of Ambracia? It is not impossible that future epigraphic discoveries may shed some light on this, but it seems a fundamental issue if we are trying to understand questions of identity in new communities. The wholesale redistribution of land among the synoecised population (if they were the beneficiaries rather than colonists) must have diminished any sense of identity with a previous community.



### Populations and cemetery evidence

The archaeological evidence relating to the incoming populations themselves is frustratingly limited at both sites. No residential building has been found at Butrint that actually dates to this period, although as noted above in most parts of the site it has proved impossible to reach levels of the Augustan period. Nonetheless, away from the public heart of the city finds of the Augustan period are very limited, with little showing up even as residual finds. Of the 8 coins from the period 44 BCE–CE 14 found in the recent excavations, 6 come from the villa of Diaporit.<sup>73</sup> This obviously in part reflects the fact that it was possibly to reach levels of the appropriate period at Diaporit (although most were residual finds in later contexts). Nonetheless even at Diaporit only a single deposit was found dating to the latter half of the 1st century BCE, suggesting that occupation of the site in this period was not extensive.

Perhaps the clearest evidence of an immigrant population at Butrint may come from the cemetery evidence, where there is significant evidence of cremation burial, which is otherwise rare in Greece during the imperial period.<sup>74</sup> The Italian Mission at Butrint found a number of cremation groups within the cemetery on Mount Sotirēs to the west of the town, while more recently a substantial cremation tomb has been documented on the Vrina Plain. Further probable examples can be seen in the marshes along the Vivari Channel approaching the site from the Corfu Strait and on the lakeshore on the north side of the site.<sup>75</sup> Flämig points to further examples of cremation burials from Epirus, including a very substantial tomb from Nikopolis, positioned in front of the south east gate, together with other Italic traits in the funerary architecture of the region.<sup>76</sup> Further *columbaria*, apparently dating to the 1st century CE, were revealed in more recent excavations in the north cemetery.<sup>77</sup> The fact that cremation failed to become an established part of funerary practice in Greece, suggests that these relatively isolated examples of the practice do represent individuals from the Italian peninsula or their descendants maintaining the practice. Whether this was intended in part as a deliberate statement of a different identity is impossible to say, but the cremation ritual will presumably have appeared as an alien practice to the Greek inhabitants of Butrint and Nikopolis.

### Conclusion

It is clear that the evidence for a colony at Nikopolis is debatable, given the differences apparent between

it and other contemporary Augustan colonies such as Butrint and Patras, particularly in terms of epigraphy and numismatic data. Lange presents the arguments for and against the colony at Nikopolis, but the evidence is ultimately inconclusive.<sup>78</sup> However, whether or not there was ever a colony at Nikopolis, the similarities between Butrint and Nikopolis are marked, particularly in terms of the fundamental reorganisations of landownership apparent at both sites.

In this sense the insistence of many commentators on the "Greekness" of Nikopolis seems rather reductive, and slightly perverse given the manner of its foundation. It appears redolent of the 19th- and 20th-century ethos that remains strong in classical studies in which Greece is seen as untainted by the years of Roman domination.<sup>79</sup>

The Roman colonists at Butrint, and the synoecised settlers at Nikopolis, were part of an overall political process involving a fundamental restructuring of localised power structures, although it is clear that there were myriad variations in the ways in which this was achieved in Greece.<sup>80</sup> We shouldn't lose overall sight of this process through artificial separation of colonies and non colonies, or Greeks and Romans.

Finally, the fundamental, and perhaps slightly depressing conclusion, is that most of our currently available evidence in north-west Greece is basically ill-suited to addressing questions about the reality of the colonial experience for both colonists and colonised or for those who were forcibly or voluntarily transferred from one place to another. The evidence outlined in this paper merely gives tantalising hints about the ways in which very small sections of the population wished to portray themselves usually in formal circumstances (*e.g.* in epigraphy or in death).

Although they were doubtless of great interest to a small circle of participants, it is likely that many people took little notice of statues of distant political leaders and their wives and relations, or inscriptions in a language that would have been unfamiliar to many. While we are interested in the machinations of the Julio-Claudians and Augustus's use of Trojan imagery, because of the way that study of the Roman past has developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, it is questionable whether these things would have been the subject of widespread discussion on the streets of Butrint and Nikopolis. While not wishing to draw an overly facile comparison, it is worth considering how few people in the UK would be able to name their local councillors or their representatives to the European Parliament, notwithstanding the influence



that such representatives arguably have on their lives or local environment.

There remains a need for an archaeology of the colonists and colonised which actively seeks to move away from the sorts of evidence that have been discussed in this paper, as ultimately this evidence is a by-product of a Classical archaeological tradition based on an art-historical discipline framed within narrative political history. As such, the chances of such evidence being suited to understanding the lives of the inhabitants and the ways in which they viewed themselves and each other are very limited. Personal identity entails choices in house design, clothing, personal adornment, diet, food preparation and many other areas, but extensive domestic contexts of the late 1st century BCE–1st century CE have not thus far been excavated at either Butrint or Nikopolis. Without excavation of such areas, the chances of advancing this field of study seem slim, although systematic study of the excavated cemetery assemblages and skeletal evidence from Nikopolis should be a priority for the excavators.

In conclusion, therefore, future work on the Julio-Claudian foundations in Epirus and elsewhere needs to widen its remit from understanding the aspirations, achievements and ideologies of the ruling dynasty and the associated political class, to an explicit focus on the lives of those Romans and natives who still remain largely invisible.

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## Notes

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33. Rizakis 1997, 25.
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35. Strabo, *Geog.* 7.7.6.
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37. Faklari 2007, 564–65.
38. Zachos 2001; 2003; 2007; Lange 2009.
39. Malcrino 2007.
40. Malcrino 2007, 381.
41. Bowden 2007, 203.
42. Deniaux 2007, 35; Melfi 2007, 27.
43. Reconstruction and translation by Murray and Petsas 1989, 76 and 86. A recently discovered part of the inscription indicates that the name of Mars appeared before that of Neptune rather than after (as in Suetonius) (Zachos 2003, 76).
44. Suet. *Aug.* 18.2; Lange 2007, 167–9.
45. Lange 2009, 117.
46. Lange 2009, 110–11.
47. Bowden 2007, 190. See also Zachos 2007 on the street plan of Nikopolis.
48. Katsadima 2007.
49. Zachos 2007, 295 (walls); Katsadima 2007 (terraccottas).
50. Paus. 7.6; Tzouvara-Souli 2001.
51. Strabo 17. 1. 10; Purcell 1987, 76–7.
52. Welch 1999, 138.
53. Ugolini 1937, 92.
54. Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 121.
55. Bowden 2007.
56. Zachos 2007.
57. Bowden 2007, 195.
58. Malcrino 2007, 381.
59. Bergemann 1998, 98–100.
60. Doukellis, Dufaure and Fouache 1995.
61. The barrier of the Vivari Channel can still be keenly felt at moments when the existing cable ferry breaks down. It was also used as a checkpoint by the isolationist communist government who maintained the Butrint peninsula as a militarised zone to prevent people escaping to Greece.
62. Bescoby 2007.
63. Doukellis 1988.
64. Romano 2000; Romano 2003.
65. Giorgi 2002; 2003.
66. Bowden 2009. For an example see Gravani 2007.
67. For example by Schwander 2001 and Gravani 2001 for Kassope.
68. Riginos 2007.
69. Petropoulos 2007.
70. Karatzeni 2001.
71. Doukellis 1988.
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73. Moorhead *et al.* 2007.
74. Flämig 2007, 328.
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76. Flämig 2007.
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78. Lange 2009.
79. Alcock 1993, 2.
80. Rizakis 1997, 22.